

Public-Private Partnership in Sustainable Tourism Development: A Panacea o Poverty Alleviation in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

One of the cardinal economic interests of the Federal Government of Nigeria is to diversify the economy in relation to areas of competitive advantage, and one of such areas is tourism. Tourism has become a major source of economic diversification for many countries, allowing for new employment and income earning opportunities. Although, the developed countries account for a higher proportion of global tourism, many developing countries are beginning to take advantage of the huge opportunities offered by this sector. However, only developing countries with effective natural and man-made tourism supporting and enhancing infrastructure have been able to develop their tourism sector and seize the attendant advantages. Nigeria is one of such countries, with huge tourism potentials, especially given its natural and diversified landscapes. Consequently, Nigeria is currently seeking to diversify her economy away from crude oil production to maximize the employment and income generating opportunities Tourism offers. This paper therefore critically analyses Nigeria's tourism potentials, focusing on the impacts on the wider economy. Appealing to the qualitative method of research, the paper concludes that the tourism sector has huge potentials yet unexplored, which if properly supported, through the Public-Private Partnership Policy, can contribute significantly to the economic diversification and poverty alleviation efforts of Cross River State government, one of the leading states in this sector.

Keywords: tourism, economic diversification, development, sustainability, poverty alleviation.

INTRODUCTION

Heavy metals are one of the most serious pollutants The travel and tourism industry has in the late 20th century emerged as the world's largest industry, serving as an alternative income earner to most non-industrialized nations (Duke, 2012). Since the beginning of time humans have traveled. Food, water, safety or acquisition of resources (trade) was the early travel motivations. But the idea of travel for pleasure or exploration soon emerged following advancement in technology which provides the means or mode of travel. For instance, the invention of the wheel and the rail provided new modes of transportation. And each improvement in technology increased individuals' opportunities to travel. As roads were improved and governments stabilized, interest in travel increased for education, sightseeing, and religious purposes.

On the other hand, Tourism is identified as an effective way to revitalize the economy of any Nation and widely acknowledged as one of the fastest growing industry globally (Raymond, 2001; Ozgen, 2003; Chockalingam and Ganesh, 2010; Jennie, 2012). The continuous and rapid growth of tourism is not in isolation of the stable economic growth experienced in the global economy, which lasted from the mid-1990 to 2007. This growth

has facilitated increased global disposable income, demand for leisure, combined with the global economic restructures in response to globalization. Thus, tourism has become a major source of economic growth, employment, earnings, and foreign exchange for many countries (Basu, 2003) and considered by developing countries as a main source of development, growth and poverty alleviation (Haller, 2012).

Tourism is also a collection of activities, services and industries that delivers a travel experience, including transportation, accommodations, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses, activity facilities and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) informs that tourism is currently the world's largest industry with annual revenues of over \$3 trillion dollars; and that Tourism provides over six million jobs in the United States, making it the country's largest employer.

Given the definition of tourism by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as an activity involving the travels of persons to places outside their usual environment for not more than once for leisure, it is indicative of how

such activities may benefit host and local economies and communities. This is particularly the case as the notion of tourism has grown from the pursuit of the privileged few to the indulgence of the masses (Murphy, 1985). Indeed, tourism has a range of benefits both to the individual tourist, tourism organizations, and the local economies and communities in terms of employment, income, and enhancement to the quality of life (Besculides et al, 2002; Oh, 2005). That is why Ajao (2012) argues that if Nigeria gets its tourism sector right, tourism will serve as an employer of labour besides agriculture.

For some major tourist destinations, tourism has become a major alternative form of commodity export and a significant source of foreign exchange that allows internal and external trade balances to be reconciled. Thus, there is no doubt that tourism can make an effective contribution to economic development; provided it is developed sustainably so as to minimize the ecological footprints, and lighten the burden of government in the sector. The rest of the paper is structured to highlight the impact of Tourism on poverty alleviation through the Public-Private Partnership, and summarizes with some projections as to how Nigeria could benefit maximally from this sector.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The potentials of sustainable tourism development and the huge scope for diversifying mono-cultural economies through tourism has drawn the attention of policy makers, unilateral and multilateral organizations contending with the underdevelopment and the attendant poverty in developing countries to the sector (UNWTO, 2007). One of the unique characteristics of the tourism industry that makes it a prime sector from which employment can be engineered, especially in the case of the developing countries, are its labour intensive characteristics. This is particularly significant given the huge unemployment rate, especially among the youths (O'Higgins, 1998) and the labour surplus characteristic of most developing economies (Ranis, 2004). Given the low-level skills and the relatively short-lead period for training and skills acquisition, the tourism industry lends itself as a sector capable of generating huge employment and income earning opportunities.

Nigeria has no doubt had its share in this regard because over the last 50 years, the tourism industry has grown significantly. During this period, the country has offered a wide variety of tourist attractions such as extended and roomy river and river beaches ideal for swimming and other water sports, unique wildlife, vast tracts of unspoiled nature ranging from tropical forest, magnificent waterfalls, some new rapidly growing cities

and climatic conditions in some parts particularly conducive to holidaying. Other attractions include traditional ways of life preserved in local customs; rich and varied handicrafts and other colourful products depicting or illustrative of native arts and lifestyle, and the authentic unsophisticated but friendly attitude of many in the Nigerian population.

Similarly, the tourism sector is a magnet for foreign direct investments and affords developing countries the opportunities to attract inward direct investments both for soft and hard tourism infrastructures. The significance of this trend can only be imagined if the low foreign exchange earning capacity of most developing countries is considered. This combined with low-level divisible capital nature of the downstream end of the tourism industry; it affords huge opportunities for creating small and medium sized enterprises, a panacea for poverty alleviation.

In the experience of developed economies, the role of small and medium sized businesses in employment creation and technological as well as managerial innovation is widely acknowledged (Schreyer, 1996). Available data shows that between 1950 and 2004, tourist arrivals at destinations have grown from 25 million to 760 million (Zhehna, 2003). This figure has further grown to 842 million by 2006 (UNWTO, 2007, Cooper et al (2008) and this is expected to rise by an annual average rate of 4.3 per cent until 2010 to record a total of 1.6 billion by 2020. The expected associated income is forecast at US\$ 2 trillion (Pearson, et. al., 2008, Mowforth and Munt, 2009, OECD, 2008, and Olorunfemi and Raheem, 2008). In Nigeria International Tourist arrivals was 4,037,808 in 2013 attracting an income of \$649,468,486.

TOURISM AS A TOOL FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Although it is difficult to accurately quantify the benefits of tourism (Mbaiwa, 2003) there is no doubt that the tourism market will expand rapidly to provide alternative income and employment opportunities for countries to seize upon (Chibuikem, 2009; Rogers 2009). For a country like Nigeria longing for effective economic diversification, tourism presents such an opportunity. Tourism is widely acknowledged as an effective tool for socio-economic development, because of the possible backward and forward linkages with other sectors of the economy, which allows it to facilitate employment opportunities, income, local economic development, and enhance the quality of life (Hall, 2007). However, Hall (2007) further argues that the extent to which these benefits can accrue to a nation crucially depends on local conditions. Manwa (2012)

Band. There are other non-competing bands. The carnival has been dubbed Africa's biggest street party, with dance groups covering a distance of 12km.

The bands comprise five major components: A decorated truck on the move, Members of the band on

organized move, The creativity of the band, its music, choreography, costumes and artistic representations, The band's ability to interpret the year's theme, and The presentation of its king and Queen in terms of carriage costume and general appeal.



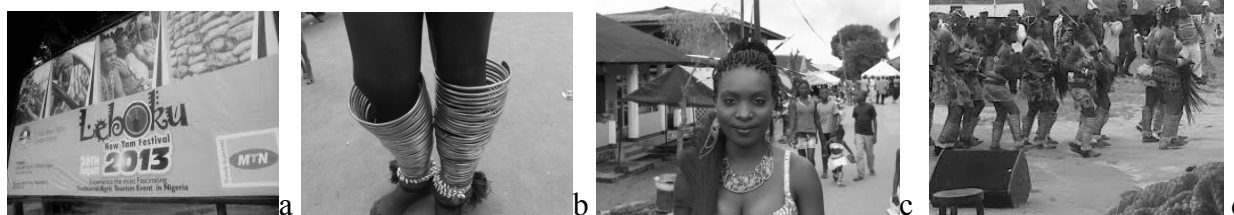
Figure 3(a – d): Scenes from 2013 Calabar Festival

The Visual Art Department of Cross River University of Technology Calabar and the Theatre Arts Department of the University Of Calabar are the main arteries sustaining the carnival's visual displays. While the Visual Arts Department provides artists who fabricate things, design floats, decorate, model objects, construct installations, design fabrics etc, the theatre artists handle performance, choreography, dance interpretations among others (see figure 3: a – d). The carnival showcases the antenna role of arts, heritage, theatre, culture hospitality and entertainment in tourism development. The carnival annually attracts over 20,000 tourists to the State and has popularized the city of Calabar in national and international news media. It has made valuable contributions in advertising Cross River State tourism potentials as tourists who visit the state spend a lot of money on accommodation, food, shopping and sightseeing which multiply retail income and businesses within the December period.

Leboku Festival

Leboku is the annual New Yam Festival celebrated in Ugep, Cross River State to honour the earth goddess and

the ancestral spirits of the land in Ugep, one of the five settlements of Yakurr. The three-week festival is the culmination of many events: the beginning of the yam harvest, a time to appease the gods and ancestors, a public parade of engaged maidens, a commemoration of events that led to the migration from the Yakurr ancestral home to the present site, and a period of holiday in the Yakurr traditional calendar (mid-August through mid-September). The Yakurr calendar runs from August to July. During the Leboku, people keep away from intense farming activities and exchange visits with their families. The Leboku is also meant to usher in peace, good health and prosperity". In Yakurr, before the festival proper is held, several traditional rites are performed. The Obol Lupon of Ugep and Paramount Ruler of Yakurr assisted by other chiefs perform the traditional rites to usher in the new yam. Though most of these traditional rites are not open to the public, communities in Yakurr local government are always in festive mode throughout the one month the festival will last. The 30-day activity heralding the new yam festival starts with the 'Etikekomi', visitation to farm roads to accept palm wine and sundry gifts. On that day, tapers give out their palm wine free.



a) 2013 (New Yam) Leboku Festival; b) Legs and the bangles worn by the maidens; c) A well-dressed maiden
d) Some Leboku dancers

Figure 4: Scenes from 2013 Leboku New Yam Festival

After that is Leboku Kepile, the traditional wrestling festival. The Ikoabase Leboku-wa (church thanks giving service) as well as 'Ebokupom' (traditional offering of supplication and appeasement to the gods of the land)

are also held as part of the festivities. As part of the ceremonies to usher in the new yam, Okondel, a rite meant only for initiates is also held. Normally the Okondel ceremony, which is held only at night, is performed by the Obol Lupon of Ugep. Other activities

held before the new yam festival is unveiled, including 'Eboku Pom (performed by traditional priests), Mblemi as well as Ledomboku (the actual traditional new yam celebration.) It is after all these traditional activities have been performed that the government Leboku is celebrated. But the 'government' Leboku is given more prominence than the traditional Leboku by the state government. In its bid to promote tourism, the state is said to have added some innovations into the event (see figures 4: a – d).

No wonder the state governor, Senator Lyell Imoke in his 2014 budget speech stated, "...that we have become a destination for tourists within the sub-region is not in doubt. This leadership position in tourism development has come with great responsibility; that of improving facilities to cope with this rising profile and to meet visitor expectations. Accordingly, our tourism policy and regulatory framework will be overhauled not only to reflect this trend but also to create the right environment which will encourage private sector participation in our tourism industry. Consequently, to consolidate gains made in this sub-sector of our service industry, the sum of N1,137,658,500.12 (One Billion, One Hundred and Thirty Seven Million, Six Hundred and Fifty-Eight Thousand, Five Hundred naira, Twelve only) is made available in the 2014 fiscal year".

Obudu Ranch Resort

The Obudu Ranch is a popular holiday destination for adventurous tourists wishing to explore the remote corners of Nigeria. Situated in the northeast corner of Cross River State, only 72.42 kilometers from the Cameroon border, a tourist can enjoy the countryside of both Nigeria and Cameroon at the same time. The Obudu Plateau is spread over an area of 103.6 square kilometers. It is over 1,524m, 1,612 meters above sea level and has temperate weather condition to ensure green vegetation and grazing of cattle round the year. The climate is cool and pleasant with no mosquitoes. The landscape is spectacular, with rolling grasslands, deep-wooded valleys and waterfalls. The Ranch is a tourist delight as a result of its divergent attractions. There are a natural swimming pool, horse riding, beautiful waterfall to behold, gorilla camp, bird watching, sporting facilities and accommodation. It is best to visit Obudu in the dry season since during the rainy season much of the ranch may be covered in mist and low clouds and there are thunderstorms. Between December and February the harmattan is heavy; therefore, the best times for a visit are the end of October to December and March to May before the rainy season.

Attractions

Gorilla Camp, 13 km from the hotel, is accessible either by vehicle or on foot, where one can take a long, picturesque walk to the camp, and observe gorillas in their natural habitat. Guests may also ride horses or embark on hiking trips into the wild (comfortable shoes and a guide are recommended). Bird watching here is unparalleled and there is a pleasantly shaded natural and man-made swimming pools (see figure 6) near the Ranch House. If visitors accept the challenge of a three-hour hike, they'll be rewarded with a stop at the waterfall, nestled amid captivating scenery. In spite of the altitude, it can get quite hot in the day, with five sunshine hours in the dry season (October - April) and roughly two during rainy season (July to August). Other activities include: golf, badminton, lawn tennis, squash, horseback riding and international mountain race.



Figure 5: Swimming pools at the resort



Figure 6: Road to Obudu Ranch Resort

Accommodations

The Ranch Hotel maintains 33 chalets and boasts of a friendly staff, superb restaurant and bar, and laundry/dry cleaning services. Chalets provide exquisite comfort with a large sitting room, color TV, VCR, cocktail bar, kitchen & spacious bedroom with double bed. The Ranch Hotel operates 24-hours during peak periods, September-December.

Route

The sights are spectacular on the drive east (see figure 6); through rolling mountains and the dense forest with trees so high their branches form a canopy, shading out the sun entirely. This phenomenon has led to the area being called “Nigeria’s Amazon,” and is not to be missed. However, should one prefer to fly, they can do so from any major city to Calabar then proceed by car over the five hour route via Ikom.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

After very careful analysis, the following observations were made: That the friendly nature of Cross River State environment enhances sustainable tourism development. This is because the state’s environment is generally friendly. The state is acclaimed as the cleanest in Nigeria. Studies also show that there is a good security network in the state. This is in line with the general perception of people about the state of security in Cross River State. Many people who have had cause to relocate to the state from other neighbouring States of the Niger Delta or the other parts of the country attest to this. It is a fact that events of kidnapping, assassinations, arm robbery, ethnic fighting, pipelines vandalization, religious fighting occurring daily in other Niger Delta States as well as other parts of Nigeria are hardly experienced in Cross River State. Interestingly, therefore there is very low occurrence of intertribal wars in the state. Cross Riverians are not given to violence hence there are little skirmishes happening in rural communities that could be perceived as capable of threatening the peaceful nature of the state. Clean and portable water is also available. This claim has been attested to by the Cross River State Water Board Bulletin (2005) which reported that the State through the World Bank assisted water programme enjoys a good supply of water.

This study has also shown that the private sector has done much in the area of development of road maps to guide tourists, building and running of hotels, generating employment for citizens, provision of tourism workers and information among others. These findings are in conformity with previous works of Nwakana (1980), Smith (1979), WTO report (1967) and others. These studies show that the private sector has over time invested in hotels and tour agency business, and financial support to the public sector for the development of tourism.

In Cross River State, a framework for private sector participation is also being put in place through the “Cross River Tourism” initiative. This partnership is aimed at achieving effective destination marketing, proper regulation of the tourism industry practitioners,

the development of private enterprise in the tourism sector and the promotion of private sector investment.

Generally, Tourism strives better in states with friendly tax laws. In Cross River State both the public and private sectors have contributed immensely in the development of tourism (Udumo, 2013). While the private sector contributed in the area of road map development to guide tourists, building and running hotels, generating employment for citizens, the public sector on its part has contributed in all areas such as expansion of airports, establishment of Airlines, building of good roads, provision of good public transport system, training of tour guards, establishment of traveling agencies, promotion of cultural activities, provision of employment opportunities, and provision of infrastructures. For tourism industry to be fully developed, both sectors must as a necessity collaborate to harness the enormous natural resources embedded in the state. The areas requiring collaboration mostly include transport system, training and re-training of hospitality workers, provision of infrastructures of facilities, creating of employment opportunities. Both sectors must play a complementary role if tourism is to become one of the key factors of the economic growth of state and indeed the nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that tourism is one sector where the Cross River State position has remained unchallenged in Nigeria, and is steadily becoming a credible destination within the West African sub-region. Tourism offer opportunity to meet people while enjoying a range of social, cultural or physical activities. Tourism promotes good quality of life; increases self-esteem and confidence; gives people the opportunity to make their own choices; gives satisfaction, enjoyment and pleasure; enables people to become involved in and feel part of the community; tourism increases the opportunity to gain and develop new friendships; allows partakers to be challenged, take risks and experience new things; bridges the gap between attending and participating in the community; allows people to contribute their skills and feel a sense of belonging and accomplishment, and promotes friendships through shared experiences.

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made; that:

- i. the public sector should resuscitate most of the tourist sites such as zoo, parks and other entertainment sites in the state so as to keep the tourism tempo high and attractive.

- ii. the public sector should collaborate more with the private sector by undertaking the funding and management of the state tourism industry.
- iii. the public sector should provide accessibility to the tourism site by building good roads and/or rails.
- iv. the public sector should partner with the private sector to hold conferences, talk shows on tourism either monthly, quarterly or yearly, to educate people about tourism development potentials in the state.

Furthermore, the following strategies that focus specifically on unlocking opportunities and generating net benefits through tourism should not be underscored:

- governments have crucial role in creating and accomplishing strategies, policies, regulations, as well as ensuring coordination between stakeholders.
- the private sector is an essential player, as partner, facilitator, customer, marketing channel and advisor.
- the Poor have roles as producers, suppliers, workers, participants and decision makers.
- civil Society (educational institutions at all levels, trade associations, journalists, community-based organizations) has an important part to play to facilitate inclusion by the poor.
- donors must provide technical assistance, source funding to enable the further development of tourism projects and expertise.

Additionally, having identified tourism as an economic venture, requiring the involvement of both public/private sectors of the economy, the need to further encourage tourism in Cross River State, Nigeria can no longer be overemphasized. Therefore, one fact should be noticed: that sustainable tourism cannot automatically eliminate poverty on its own. For that reason, there should be rightly created tourism policy as well as developing plans in which eliminating poverty is a primary goal. This can be done through:

- * strengthening existing legislation.
- * establishing a presidential Council on Tourism and a Tourism Steering Committee.
- * creating awareness on Tourism as a unique key to driving the economy.
- * strengthening the professional/personnel staff of the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism.
- * having a unified voice in the commercial tourism sector.
- * encouraging Public/Private relationships.
- * creating an enabling environment for the private sector involvement and investment in the tourism sector.

- * addressing the current marketing of Nigeria tourism potentials.

It is therefore necessary to have good cooperation between all stakeholders. Only in that way can it be accomplished for tourism to be an efficient means for eliminating poverty. Hence, the principal conclusions from this study of the impact of Tourism on the economy are that:

- Spending by international tourists has a direct impact on the national economy (estimated at US\$280m/N36b between 2006 – 2010).
- Downstream economic impacts from the “export” revenues of international tourist spending are estimated to generate additional gross revenue of US\$224m/N29b.
- While the incidence of domestic leisure travel may be low, the sheer size of Nigeria’s population means that there is a significant contribution to the demand for tourism services from domestic travel activity. The revenue value of this impact is yet unknown.
- The revenue generated from travel within the country by employees and staff of Federal Government departments and agencies generates a demand for an estimated US\$68m/N8.8b of transport and hospitality sectors.
- State governments also make a considerable contribution to the transport and hospitality sector in the undertaking of official travel activities. The revenue value of this impact is unquantifiable.
- The contribution to government revenue from VAT levies on the Hospitality sector, recorded at N1.149 million in 2004, is considered to grossly understate the actual level of revenue received.
- Company Income tax generated by the Hospitality sector was recorded at N313 million in the 2005 year, the first year such a breakdown was available.
- Implementation of the Tourism Development Master Plan in Tourism Cluster development will disperse the economic benefits from tourism activity. The economic benefits from tourism activity will be spread much wider and to a greater proportion of the population than is currently the case. (Nigeria Tourism Development Master Plan, 2006)
- Demand for labour will receive a very significant stimulus from implementing a Tourism Development Master Plan in Nigeria.

The future for tourism in Nigeria thus depends on these opportunities and challenges. The diversity of cultural attractions, the friendly disposition of the people, a revamped National Tourism Organization and

Human Resources Development will enhance these key opportunities. Implementation of the Nigerian Tourism Development Master Plan should therefore be given major priority by Nigerian government.

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